
On the optionality of boundary markers (and pro-forms) of subordinate clauses

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In the spirit of Hawkins' (2004) 'Performance-Grammar-Correspondence Principle', this talk sets out to explore usage patterns and grammatical conventions in a typologically understudied domain of clause combining: In many languages, one can find alternations between overt and null realizations of morphological material at the boundary of the subordinate clause (as in (1)) or, less commonly, between overt and null realizations of a pro-form of the subordinate clause in the matrix (as in (2)):

- (1) a. *I know (that) Robert is going to the concert tonight.*
 b. S-ʔip-waš (hi=)ʔal-saʔ-aktina
 3-say-PST DEP=STAT-FUT-come
 'She said (that) she was going to come.'
 Barbareño Chumash (Wash 2001: 89)
- (2) *He knew (it) that they were not mad at him.* (BNC)

The aim of the talk is to provide a first cross-linguistic survey of these phenomena in selected types of complex sentences (notably complement, relative and purpose clauses), and to elucidate recurrent principles that govern these kinds of differential coding. Among other things, the observed variability turns out to be sensitive to argument sharing across the two clauses, to the position of the subordinate clause, persistence effects of grammaticalization and, crucially, to the predictability of the subordinate clause in the context of specific material in the matrix (e.g. a certain matrix predicate). The latter factor is fully in line with proposals that speakers exploit their probabilistic knowledge of the relative surprisal and mutual informativity of co-occurring linguistic units (cf., e.g., Levy and Jaeger 2007, Jaeger 2010) and that the resulting economical patterns tend to conventionalize into grammatical constraints (Haspelmath 2008). However, the talk will also explore alternative (or additional) explanations for the occurrence of the less economical variant, such as more socio-communicatively grounded accounts (e.g. McGregor 2013) and the

effects of analogy and information structure (e.g. Bergh 1997).

References: • Bergh, G. (1997): Vacuous extraposition from object in English. *Studia Neophilologica* 69, 37–41. • Hawkins, J. A. (2004). *Efficiency and Complexity in Grammars*. Oxford University Press. • Haspelmath, M. (2008). Creating economical morphosyntactic patterns in language change. In: *Language Universals and Language Change*. Ed. J. Good. Oxford University Press, 185–214. • Jaeger, T. F. (2010). Redundancy and reduction: Speakers manage information density. *Cognitive Psychology* 61(1), 23–62. • Levy, R. and T. F. Jaeger (2007). Speakers optimize information density through syntactic reduction. In: *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems*. Eds. B. Schölkopf, J. C. Platt and T. Hoffman. MIT Press, 849–856. • McGregor, W. B. (2013). Optionality in grammar and language use. *Linguistics* 51(6), 1147–1204. • Wash, S. (2001). *Adverbial Clauses in Barbareño Chumash Narrative Discourse*. PhD dissertation, University of California at Santa Barbara.